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FOREIGN NEWS ON APPLES

OVER-RIPENESS IN EXPORT APPLES

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The necessity of improved handling of Eastern barreled apples for the export trade, during autumn months, particularly in respect to pre-cooling, is emphasized in the following report of Mr. Edwin Smith, the Department of Agriculture's fruit specialist in Europe.

Pre-cooling Barreled Apples

The York Imperial and other seasonable varieties from the Eastern states observed in Liverpool and London during the first week in January had arrived in the best apparent condition of any of the 1927 crop. Crisp, bright, flashy, with lots of life and no decay, with barrels practically all tight, they attracted the attention of the trade, created confidence and gave the business zest - because the apples had life.

Growers and shippers may well ask why it is that Virginia York Imperials arrive in Europe in January in better condition than they do fresh out of the orchards in October. Why are not our weekly cables now reporting "Much over-ripe fruit; slight decay; variable condition; and many slack barrels" as they did in September, October and November? My answer to that question is, "Pre-cooling".

By "pre-cooling" I do not mean that present arrivals have passed through any mystic and expensive process unfamiliar to all fruit growers and shippers, because I call any process which removes heat from fruit prior to shipment a pre-cooling process. Present arrivals of York Imperial apples are coming out of the cold storages of the Eastern states. These apples unquestionably were moved out of the summer heat of the orchards promptly after picking and packing and were placed in cold storage plants without delay. Here the heat was removed from the apples and ripening processes were immediately checked. The fruit was pre-cooled. During winter shipment the fruit has a cool ride to New York and across the Atlantic. It arrives in a very uniform and satisfactory condition. Fruit should arrive in this condition all during the autumn months.

Lack of pre-cooling causes heavy losses: In contrast to these winter conditions, recall those surrounding the early shipments: A very warm October; indecision about selling or consigning; a delay of a few days in orchard or packing shed after being packed - maybe a week, possibly two weeks; a box car ride to New York; perhaps a week's lay-over in the Jersey yards while New York sweltered under an Indian summer. Finally, after spending its apportioned time on quay and lighter, it is placed in the ordinary hold of a ship with 50 or 60 carloads of apples that are equally hot and, to help this fireless-cooker arrangement along, the ship spends two days, more or less, running through the Gulf Stream before there is any hope of a cooling voyage. Under these autumn conditions, the fruit is not given a chance to arrive in Europe in good condition and to sell at its best advantage.

Each autumn it is my experience to observe in Europe the over-ripe, devitalized and decayed condition of fruit that should be in its prime. It is dead looking, because at temperatures of 60°, 65° and 70°, ripening processes in the apples have been speeding apace. The fruit has been living a very fast life. Hardy old varieties like the York Imperial and Winesap arrive with a sleepy, haggard look about them, while those of less robust constitutions, such as Jonathan and Stayman, arrive at the end of this devastating period of high life, simply done-up - down and out. The selling price of the former varieties is often from 50 cents to \$1.00 per barrel below that fresh, live fruit would bring, while losses on the Jonathan and Stayman are appalling.

Growers in Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland are close to eastern markets, but, owing to circumstances of climate and transportation, they are farther from their export markets than are growers in the Pacific Northwest, when distance is measured in terms of condition of fruit upon market arrival. Therefore, eastern growers should give more attention to removal of heat from apples before autumn shipment. At present they are giving less attention to it - practically none at all.

How are these autumn shipments of barreled apples to be pre-cooled? That is a problem yet to be solved. One practical manner of removing some of the heat from the fruit prior to shipment would be to use iced refrigerator cars from the orchard to the port instead of using box cars and stock cars. Two or three days in a modern refrigerator car should remove from 15° to 20° of heat from a carload of apples. A cargo of from 50 to 100 carloads of apples, starting from New York with an advantage of 20°, should make a vast difference in its arrival at London or Liverpool, even though the fruit is carried in ordinary storage. In the ship's refrigerators, it should solve the problem, providing all of the fruit was so cooled.

Careless fall shipping: It is very noticeable that apples arriving in Liverpool at this time of the year are generally in better barrels, have the bilge hoops more uniformly nailed down in place, barrel-heads more plainly

and neatly stenciled and are found to have fewer slack barrels than are autumn shipments. It seems probable that apples packed for cold storage are given more attention in connection with these important details than are those shipped on consignment for the grower's account during September, October and November.

The barrel of apples which goes to market during the autumn should have greater attention paid to the details of packing than the barrel being sold to a cold storage operator. Autumn shipments have far greater transportation hazards to face and at the end of their journey the competition is much greater than during the winter months. Moreover, when a grower is packing for consignment, it is his fruit and he should be every bit as particular about its packing and its appearance as is the buyer who demands a certain character of packing because the fruit is to be cold stored. That peculiar state of mind, embodied in the words, "Oh, it is just for export", must be gotten away from and replaced by one expressed as follows: "But this lot is for export".

EDWIN SMITH,
Specialist in Foreign Marketing.

